

# Initiatives of Knowledge Management in Brazilian Chamber of Deputies

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## **Abstract**

*This paper aims to enlighten the complexity of Knowledge Management (KM) in public organizations in Brazil, particularly in Legislative Institutions. A mainly theoretical approach was considered to show an overview of KM in Brazilian Chamber of Deputies (CD). Besides the documentary and bibliographical research, results of an empirical research with senior managers in the Institution are presented as well as analysis of the KM experience considering a Strategic Knowledge Management (SKM) approach. The motivation to for this study lays on the opportunity to discuss how KM can be better used in a public organization, as well as to indicate tendencies and defies sharing knowledge in parliamentary context. Preliminarily, as far as the Brazilian CD is concerned, results point that we are far away from real and effective KM, and there are just some no integrated initiatives in course.*

## **Keywords**

*knowledge management, Brazilian Chamber of Deputies, initiatives, defies*

## **1. Introduction**

Two decades ago, Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) presented to academic and business world the vision of how to manage a capital that was not part of the budget in a company: organizational knowledge. Following the thought of Polanyi (1966), who affirmed we know more than we can express, the difference of tacit and explicit knowledge emerged as part of the main business concerns.

The evolution of the area triggered researches and debates about the opportunities for the public sector, with caution and some adaptation. Thus, governmental institutions started to adopt initiatives in Knowledge Management (KM) in its internal context, including Legislative Institutions.

This paper aims to present an overview of the knowledge management initiatives at the Chamber of Deputies—CD, the Brazilian parliamentary lower house. It intends to bring about the understanding of KM for Legislative Institutions by assessing the perception of CD managers as far as the expected results and defies are considered (Assis, 2014). Besides, a study about strategic KM (Miranda, 2012) opens a way to contextualize the CD as a good workplace to share knowledge.

The opportunity to show the advances of the CD in modernization, striving to give the society and

parliamentarians higher service levels, motivated the present study. The methodological approach involved three kind of research. The first one is a short literature review and documental research to understand the evolution of KM field. It also allowed to appropriately obtain organize data and information about the KM initiative in CD. The second one is an empirical study that took place in the CD, involving upper level managers, using interviews to bring perceptions about the effectiveness of KM initiatives. Lastly, the study discusses the strategic knowledge management—SKM in the context of a legislative institution.

## 2. Short KM Historical Review

In order to better frame the understanding of this paper, we consider knowledge management, both processes and initiatives that involves the cycle capturing, organizing, distributing, using and evaluating information and knowledge created in organizations, and the practical actions that create knowledge effectively.

This section presents a summary of some remarkable historical milestones of KM in both general (from 1966 to 2001), and Brazilian contexts (from 2001 to 2004), including an initiative in CD, focus of this study. Table 1 summarizes KM evolution from a historical perspective. It is important to call the attention that the historical overview does not intend to be exhaustive, reflecting only the authors' view.

**Table 1. Knowledge Management Evolution Marks**

Year	KM Marks
1966	Polanyi (1966) establishes the importance of tacit knowledge as part of whole knowledge.
1995	Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) show the World how Japanese companies innovate, by using well managed knowledge.
1998	Davenport and Prusak (1998) presents the exchange marketing model of knowledge.
2001	In Brazil, Stollenwerk (2001) presents a general model of KM, including factors that positively interfere in this kind of management, as leadership, organizational culture, evaluation and rewards and ICT.
2001	Sveiby (2001) establishes criteria to measure knowledge management.
2001	Researchers from Federal University of Rio de Janeiro develop the knowledge capital model that comprises intellectual capital, infrastructural capital, network capital and environment capital (Cavalcanti <i>et al.</i> , 2001)
2001	Teixeira Filho (2001) defines KM as a construction of 3 pillars: technology (support and integration), organization (culture and strategy) and knowledge (tacit and explicit).
2001	Terra (2001) suggests seven dimensions to manage knowledge: strategic view, organizational culture, infrastructure, human resources policy, information systems, results measurement and stakeholders.

Year	KM Marks
2004	Miranda (2004) establishes an integrated SKM that includes a conceptual model, a mathematical model and a systemic model.
2005	Brazilian Chamber of Deputies starts an KM Program (Brazil, Chamber of Deputies, 2005)

Source: authors.

Table 1 shows that the consistence of KM applied to CD lays on studies of KM in private organizations, corresponding to the management school of public administration. In other words, KM in CD is an appropriation of good initiatives well tested in private organs to a parliamentary house.

The next section assesses the KM in the Brazilian CD, by starting with a short historical description, followed by some initiatives and empirical findings from a research conducted with eight admin upper level managers.

### 3. Knowledge Management in Brazilian Chamber of Deputies—CD

#### 3.1 KM Initiatives

The concerns about KM at Brazilian CD, especially the way to retain knowledge within the Institution, are not as recent as it seems. Particularly, as for the ordinary members' activities (pronouncement, debating, hearing and voting), it dates back to 1873. The focus since then relates to preserve the legislative memory since the 1823 Legislative Constitution establishment (Silva, 2003).

More recently, in 2004, Knowledge and Information Management (KIM) gained strength as discussions evolved about the importance of knowledge and information to fulfill Brazilian CD institutional roles. A project team was a starting point to come up with strategic actions to deal with knowledge and information requirements. Its main objective was to analyze and diagnose related KIM practices in use, trying to call the staff attention about its importance (Brazil, 2004). The project team concluded the work in 2010, by establishing a corporate strategic plan for the Brazilian CD as a result (Brazil, 2010).

The institutional strategic plan aimed to create a regulatory mark for KIM, including policies review and the definition of a model to safely and accurately capture, select, organize, retain, retrieve and disseminate information, content and documents (Brazil, 2010). The motivator for the plan, as noticed in the justifying reasons for its establishment, was to draw attention to the increasing generation of documents, both printed and digitalized. It also indicated the need to preserve the institutional memory and the urge to adopt international IT standard policies to improve IT corporate governance, as complying with the Brazilian court of Auditors—*Tribunal de Contas da União* (Brazil, 2008).

Nevertheless, despite the use of terms and expressions such as knowledge creation and sharing, culture, people interaction, internal and external environment management assessment, and Human Resources Management support, a strict reading of the document points out the emphasis on Information Management Policies, instead of KM in a broader perspective. The text remains explicitly focusing on

the technological dimension, by limiting mainly to information and data management.

Simultaneously, some isolated initiatives started to emerge, in several departments, derived from knowledge and information requirements needed to support decision-making processes and improve productivity, efficiency and quality of internal processes. As an example, we can mention the setting of KM committee at the Internal Control Secretariat—SECIN (Brazil, 2012a). Specifically in this case, restricted to the SECIN, there is much more emphasis on competency-based management, intellectual asset management, as far as to design a framework development of staff skill requirements and needs.

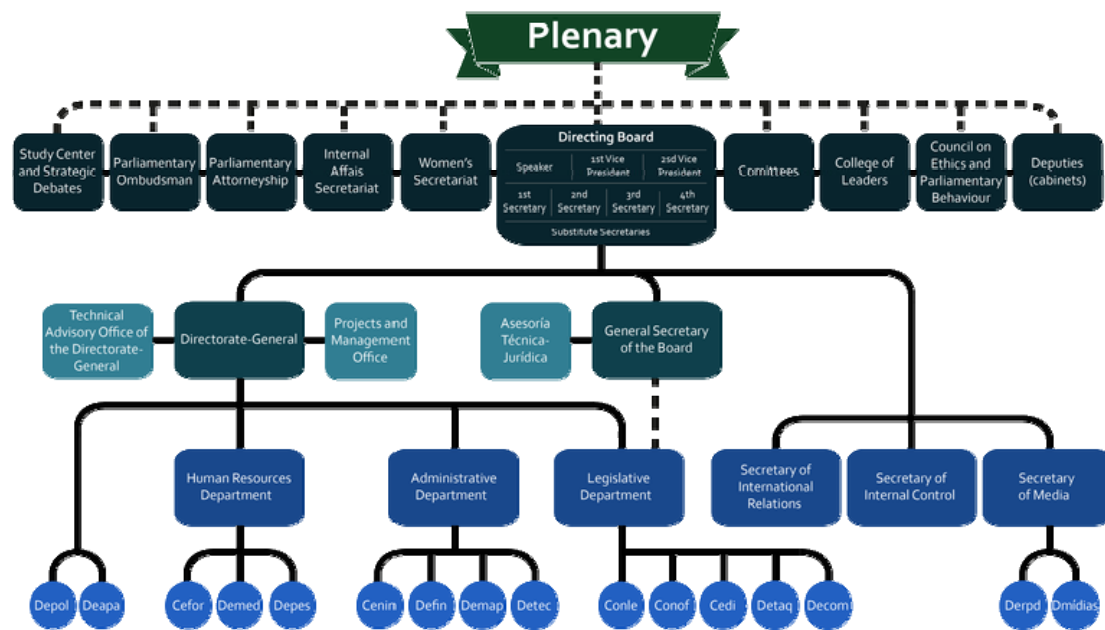
Although particularly focused on the technological dimension, the Institutional Policy of Content Management is another KM initiative at Brazilian CD, as it reinforces the importance mechanisms and tools to manage explicit and formal knowledge (Brazil, 2012b). Relevantly, the role of the CD Library (*Centro de Documentação e Informação—CEDI*) and the Center of Information Technology (*Centro de Informática—CENIN*) pervades the portfolio of strategic planning projects, related to KIM, comprising the 2012 and 2013 short-term cycle plan: file management, corporative thesaurus, information architecture, information and content indexation and enterprise content management.

Lastly, the projects of the Education and Training Center of the Brazilian CD (*Centro de Formação, Treinamento e Aperfeiçoamento—CEFOR*) have important role on the generation and sharing of knowledge, not only for the staff and CD members but also for the society. These projects covers a range of learning and teaching activities such as post-graduation programs, technical courses, distance learning, seminars, extension and research activities and publications.

### 3.2 Empirical Findings

A research conducted, with eight upper level manager of the Brazilian CD in 2013, aimed to assess their perception about the KM for the institution. The interview design covered the seven dimensions of KM proposed by Terra (2007): leadership and strategic drive; organizational culture and values; organizational structure; human resources policies; systems and processes for information and knowledge sharing; measurement and learning from the external environment. For the sake of learning from the external environment, the questions assessed the potential of KM practices to enhance the relationship between the CD and the society.

The primary perspective of the structured interview kept its focus on the management perception, without any intention to evaluate it, at this very moment, regarding the compliance with theoretical models, best practices or eventual results. The interviews assessed only the perception of the House high level management, from an oriented sample derived from managers responsible for departments or areas related to information and knowledge providers to other departments and the society, according to the House organization chart (Figure 1). The sample included managers of the following departments: Directorate-General, Projects and Management Office, General Secretary of the Board, Human Resources Department, Administrative Department, Secretary of Internal Control, Legislative Consulting Department, Education and Training Center, Information Technology Center, House Library.



**Figure 1. Brazilian Chamber of Deputies Organizational Chart**

Source: <http://www2.camara.leg.br/english/organization-chart>

The structured interview consisted of two sections: the first, a qualitative approach with seven subsections, related to the dimensions proposed by Terra (2007); the second, semi-quantitative questions aimed to look into possible relation between KM and three other variables: process efficiency, responsiveness to the society and limitations to implementing KM integrated program.

Although there have been some KM projects as part of the Brazilian CD strategic portfolio, based on the premise that there are also KM initiatives spread within the organization not fully integrated, the interviews searched to identify the managers' perception about barriers to implement an integrated KM strategy.

The Managers pointed out that the CD, as any other Legislative Institution, is a repository of very specific information and knowledge as far as the representing, legislating and scrutinizing processes are concerned. Following this perception, they regard the importance of KM as a tool to guarantee the storage, organization, and dissemination of accurate and reliable information and knowledge to the society.

As for leadership and strategic drive, the managers called the attention to the lack of an existing formal KM policy in a broader sense, defining objectives, responsibilities, which hardens the KM practices dissemination. The policies in place and strategic projects comprise primarily information management and the use of ICT. It might justify the responsibility assignment for these projects to CEDI and CENIN.

The perception about the relationship between organizational culture and values was not quite evident from the managers' responses. Two of the eight managers mentioned that such issue is complex and

difficult to deal with, emphasizing, though, the importance to enforce culture and values of collaboration and participation for knowledge sharing.

The interviewees considered the dimension organizational structure the most influential. They believed that a more flexible structure, based on project manager, team-work, would favor the KM processes, as compared to the current hierarchical and bureaucratic structure that, conversely, supports the existence of functional silos.

According to the managers' perspective, the human resource policies becomes even more important considering the diversity of the staff (permanent public servants, non-permanent employees, outsourced, interns) allied to the CD members. The actions should go further than training and recruiting. Despite the existence of some practices to identify peoples' expertise, called *Banco de Talentos*, it is not freely accessible to the staff, managers and deputies, keeping itself restricted to the Human Resources department. Accordingly, there should be policies to ensure an equal and fair environment for knowledge and information sharing.

The managers mentioned the urge for better mapping, structuring, organizing and storing information, while reinforcing the knowledge sharing dimension. Much of the organizational memory and procedures rest on staff's minds. Knowledge management practices can help to define tools to keep records of internal procedures, historical development and decision making processes.

The measurement dimension has not been the main concern so far, from the managers' point of view. They reported the difficulties to come up with metrics and indicators, even for measuring the performance of internal processes, derived from the complexity and specifics of the legislative work. Besides, the inexistency of formal KM policies does not compel specific KM metrics.

The managers exemplified some KM initiatives for learning from the external environment, focusing on the relationship between the CD and the citizens, such as the institutional portal and e-democracy tools (forums, chats, social interaction network), talk to your deputy are in place to help to understand the citizens' services needs provided by the CD: both administrative and legislative enquires. However, three interviewees presented the perception that political issues, members' attitudes and behavior affect a lot more the relationship of the CD with society. Therefore, providing communication channels or using them as KM practice is not enough if the CD members and staff do not follow up nor reply the enquires properly.

At last, it is important to add that there is no common understanding of KM concept. Most of the time, there is a misconception between KM and IM. However, two of the eight managers emphasized that there is no point in planning KM management actions if there is no organized and structured information, meaning IM practices, well established yet. According to these managers, IM must precede KM implementation.

Comparatively, drawn upon the managers' responses, organizational structure, human resources policies, systems and processes, and learning from the relationship with the society stand out as the main concerns as thinking of KM in the CD. Table 2 summarizes the empirical findings, categorized by

the seven dimensions investigated.

**Table 2. Summary of Empirical Findings**

Dimension	Findings
Leadership and strategic drive	Existence of IM policies, but KM formal policies non-existent.
Organizational structure	Hierarchical and bureaucratic, favoring silos and discouraging knowledge and information sharing.
Organizational culture and values	Absence of formal policies to reinforce collaboration and participation.
Human resources policies	Focusing on education, training and recruiting. Existence of practice to identify people expertise restricted to Human Resource department.
Systems and processes for information and knowledge sharing	Focus on IM and technological infrastructure. Initiatives to information organization, storage and retrieval.
Measurement	No metrics defined.
Learning from the external environment	Initiatives for sharing information and knowledge with the society. Systems and applications to improve communications with the society (institutional portal, e-democracy).

*Source:* authors.

### *3.3 Strategic Knowledge Management in Brazilian Chamber of Deputies*

Strategic Knowledge Management—SKM, is a particular kind of KM, defined as “a process of creation, capture, assimilation and diffusion of the organizational knowledge. It involves knowledge about planning, description, impact, prediction, evaluation and generation of strategies. This knowledge is formed by strategic and non-strategic information, as well as the wisdom accumulated by strategists and decision makers along the process of formulating and making strategic decisions” (Miranda, 2004). The perspective of SKM enables a better understanding of the empirical findings. A study developed in 2011 analyzed the application of SKM for the Brazilian CD (Miranda, 2012). In the context of the discussion of Parliament, we must take up the Strategic Knowledge Management—SKM (Miranda, 2004) in four dimensions: actors, focus, process and systemic factors.

The first refers to the actors participating in the process of generation of strategic knowledge. Primarily, the decision-makers, managers and directors represented by the organization upper-level, the ones holding formal authority to decide on the direction of the institution, should point out these actors. In the case of the Brazilian CD, two groups can be identified: Administrative Group (Brazil. Chamber of Deputies, 1971) and Legislative Affairs group (Brazil. Chamber of Deputies, 1989). The first group is represented by the Director General, supported by the Directors of administrative departments of the

Chamber: Center for Information and Documentation—CEDI, Center for Informatics—Cenin, Department of Communication—SECOM, Resource Manager Chief—DIRAD, Human Resources Chief—DHR Legislative Affairs Chief—DILEG. Besides, the strategic decision-makers of the Legislative Affairs group include the President of the Chamber of Deputies and the other members of the Governing Board. As a matter of fact, though it is possible to affirm that chiefs of legislative affairs group define the strategic direction of the CD, considering the importance of technical administrative support, the Administrative and Supporting group also assumes key role in decision-making.

The other actors involved in SKM, also focused on strategy formulation-data capture, information and knowledge, strategic alignment, drafting and proposing strategic alternatives-and the staff are top notch, responsible for supporting the strategic decisions of the CD, including the Legislative Consultants, Directors of Centers and some Legislative Analysts.

One must as well consider the different approach of the administrative group and legislative affairs group, i.e., there is clear separation between these two groups. We can ratify this segmentation by observing the strategic planning of the Chamber itself, as translated from the original document: “Art 1 Strategic management seeks to guide the management of administrative support actions and legislative technical support of the CD” (Brazil. Chamber of Deputies, 2009, p. 1). The fact is that, by separating the administrative activities from the legislative ones, we will drive against the foundation of strategic management which, as Certo and Peter (2007, p. 5), “... is to ensure that the company as a whole integrate appropriately to their environment ...”. Thus, future directions should consider the principles of Strategic Management, embracing the activities of both groups, so that the entire *corpus* of the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies turns back to a vision and a joint mission.

It is noteworthy that the literature does not present any justification for the separation of the two areas. Such situation can lead to decision conflicts and referrals regarding strategic objectives of the whole institution, creating doubt about the effective implementation of Strategic Management in the context of the Brazilian CD. In addition, although the public sector is adapting methodology widely used by private enterprises, it is advisable to respect the fundamental principles governing the Strategic Management. Therefore, the strategies of the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies need to contemplate the efforts of all areas to the extent of their social roles. The influence of segregation in dealing with strategic information and knowledge is visible. Considering that decisions affecting the direction of the legislative sphere (in principle by the President of the CD, but also agreed with the governing board), the concept of strategic management of the administrative area approaches the Michel E. Porter overview regarding the concept of operational efficiency. The concept states that the adoption of administrative improvement tools that distinguish the role of the organization from the environment does not guarantee the achievement of strategic objectives (Porter, 1996). Accordingly, for a better strategic management approach impacting information and knowledge to the formulation and strategic decision both areas, admin and legislative, should share an integrated and unique strategic action plan.

The third point relates to the treatment of information and knowledge in the Brazilian CD. The



Information and Knowledge Management Program—PGIC (Brazil. Chamber of Deputies, 2005), endorses these concerns urging the need for implementing an information and knowledge management—IKM policy for the CD, to foster the generated knowledge organization and dissemination in the context the legislative activities. However, while there are actions such as the development of the Corporate Portal of CD and initiatives to set policy for Informational Content Management (Brazil. Chamber of Deputies, 2010) there is also a considerable range of activities yet to be put in place by the Program Management Committee, as transcribed, from the original:

“Article 1 Establish the Knowledge Management Committee in the Chamber of Deputies, in charge of the following tasks:

I—to promote knowledge management in the Chamber of Deputies;

II—to formulate and facilitate implementation of knowledge management in house policy, as well as their systematic review;

III—to align management policy aware of the Chamber of Deputies to the strategic planning of the institution;

IV—to promote the growth of organizational intelligence in the Chamber of Deputies;

V—to foster knowledge generation to introduce improvements in processes and services provided by the Chamber of Members with cost reduction and re-work;

VI—to promote the use of the principles, concepts and methodologies of knowledge management, in order to trigger collaboration among workers at the house and access to sources of information and learning;

VII—to monitor and share best practices in knowledge management with other agencies and government entities, citizens and civil society” (Brazil. Chamber of Deputies, 2010, p. 1).

Moreover, there are no indicators for evaluation of KM in the CD, and even in the SKM. It leads to difficulty in determining the elements that effectively contribute to the formulation and strategic decision-making. Additionally, the use of Information Technology, Communication and Innovation – ICT is facing an overload of storage and availability of information (in the case of Corporate Portal itself and the Digital Library), halting the strategic knowledge sharing process.

One should also notice that there is an absence of preemptive actions in the legislative intelligence, either in the administrative area or in the legislative. According to (Lesca *et al.*, 2003), Anticipative Strategic Intelligence seeks to act as a radar, picking up weak signals from the external environment to the organization with “the purpose of creating business opportunities and reduce risks and uncertainties in general” (Janissek-Muniz & Lesca, 2003, p. 2).

Finally, there are SKM systemic factors related to the activities of the CD to be considered. Based on the cognition factor, it appears clear the position between the two groups of actors in the process: on one side the staff, including here the permanent staff and non-permanent employees (parliamentary secretaries, positions of special nature and contractors); on the other, the parliamentarians, assuming the effective role of making wider discussion about the bills, laws and the most appropriate public policies

to comply with the society demands. It is also important to note that, at each election, with the arrival of non-permanent employees, mainly parliamentary secretaries, as for integrating them to the admin body we must consider the special treatment required: new comers predominantly stand in need of information (data organized with meaning and context), whereas the most experienced ones demand knowledge (information categorized and treated, associated with experience and values already implanted in the CD) (Miranda, 2006).

In the context of the administrative area, the organizational model adopted by CD is a mix of the weber's model for bureaucracy, based on the formality, professionalism, and impersonality allied to "private initiatives applied to public sector", which seeks to unite the "new public management" "and entrepreneurial government" (Secchi, 2009). The traditional hierarchical structure does not stimulate knowledge sharing, as compared to the hypertext structure advocated by Nonaka and Takeuchi as most appropriate (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). On the other hand, in the legislative area the model that prevails is the political-parliamentary, more appropriate to knowledge sharing environment, particularly in the thematic committees established in the CD.

The organizational culture is a striking factor in SKM and presents itself as a central element in the discussions when focusing on the CD. By adopting it in the traditional hierarchical model to the Brazilian CD, the prevailing organizational culture is characterized by low innovation, although actions are undertaken to stimulate the "servant leadership".

Considering the individuality, the management positions in CD are marked by the personality and the level of influence of parliamentarians. Furthermore, the complex relationships between federal representatives and political parties adds a significant challenge as the structuring of strategic information systems to support parliamentary decisions is taken into consideration.

In terms of technology, another factor impacting on the SKM, is the existence of systems for automation of administrative area, such as the system for monitoring processes and practice focused on available and accessible Web content-Corporate Portal of CD. However, the use of ICT resources is restricted to manage information in the sense of treating explicit knowledge. As a matter of fact the initiatives for the treatment of tacit knowledge are rare. One can cite, however, as an instance to capture tacit knowledge that is used to record speech in parliamentary shorthand notes, allows interesting study for generation of typical strategic knowledge of the legislative subjects.

Finally, one must highlight the context factor. In the case of the Brazilian CD there is a close relationship of its actions to society, since the demands are routed to the CD in order to respond to the social context with laws, enforcement actions and public representation. Additionally, the relationship between the CD and other Federal Institutions must be considered, such as Executive and Judicial branches, the Senate and the Federal Court of Accounts—TCU.

The SKM concepts, addressing the segregation of two areas with distinct strategic plans, reinforce the defies, presented by the upper managers. Drawn upon the interviewees' speeches the Table 3 presents the defies and barriers for an integrated approach of KM for the Brazilian CD, categorized by the seven

dimensions investigated.

**Table 3. Summary of Empirical Findings**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Defies and barriers</b>
Leadership and strategic drive	Create and implement formal KM policies.
Organizational structure	Change hierarchical and bureaucratic organizational structures, to favor knowledge and information sharing.
Organizational culture and values	Implement formal policies to reinforce collaboration and participation.
Human resources policies	Align Human Resources policies to KM.
Systems and processes for information and knowledge sharing	Broaden focus to go further than IM and technological infrastructure.
Measurement	Define KM metrics.
Learning from the external environment	Improve communication with the society (institutional portal, e-democracy), especially feedback and answers.

*Source:* authors.

#### **4. Final Considerations**

Thus, this research allowed to ratify that, although important for Legislative Institutions, as understood by all the managers interviewed, they considered complexly tough to implement KM integrated practices and policies. They justified their thoughts based on the strongly embedded existing belief that knowledge is power which enforces political disputes. Besides, some other factors, according to managers' perception, can harden the KM integration task: the lack of integration between admin and legislative departments, the diversity of people involved in the internal processes and the discontinuity of plans and project at each new legislature.

As for the Brazilian House of Representatives, specifically, it is important to deepen the comprehension of the motivators for using KM practice. Understanding the reasons for applying KM techniques and models will help to envision both their usefulness and the results expected, mainly in terms of parameters to evaluate the KM practices effectively adopted.

Further studies should investigate KM practices adopted by other Legislative Institutions, taking as model the same seven dimensions: leadership and strategic drive; organizational culture and values; organizational structure; human resources policies; systems and processes for information and knowledge sharing; measurement and learning from the external environment. For the sake of learning from the external environment, the questions assessed the potential of KM practices to enhance the relationship between the CD and the society. Such approach will allow comparisons among the SKM adopted.

Since the boundary between KM and IM is not clearly defined, it is advisable that the future researches take into considerations not KM practices adopted by Legislative Institutions instead of KM in a broader sense. It might happen that Legislative Institutions have been adopting KM initiatives and practice, but do not regard them as such.

Lastly, considering the hypothesis that the inability to build a culture of confidence and truth among the actors involved in the SKM processes may affect effectiveness of KM initiatives in Legislative Institutions, a further investigation regarding the collaboration and participation culture could help to understand the relationship between SKM and these two variables.

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